

HOMECOMING

Tips for Making a Good Thing Better!



HOMECOMING DAY

- Be realistic. The perfect reunion fantasy is just that — a fantasy.
- Expect to be more tired than you think. With all the excitement and preparations, fatigue is a common homecoming reaction for everyone.
- Take time to get reacquainted with one another. Remember that intimacy involves emotional, as well as physical closeness. Talk about each other's expectations for reconnecting physically.
- Stay flexible. Emotions are intense, children are overstimulated, and schedules are unpredictable. Keeping planned activities to a minimum can help everyone avoid unnecessary stress.



TIPS FOR REUNION

- Start planning early. What kind of celebration do you want and who do you want to be a part of? What does your partner want? Make decisions together.
- Reread letters and e-mails from your partner as a refresher on what has happened during the deployment. This can help you reconnect as you prepare for living together again.
- Talk, talk, talk! Communicating openly and honestly with your partner about your feelings, expectations, needs, and worries is a sure way to help make this homecoming the best it can be!
- If homecoming day is also a duty day, plan to make the best of it. Have dinner together!

For the Partner at Home:

- Life at sea is very structured. Your partner may want to be spontaneous, or he/she may want to relax without a lot of planned activities. Work out compromises so both of your needs are met.
- Your partner may have stories to tell about overseas ports. Realize that while port calls can be a highlight, they are a very small part of deployment. Life at sea can be difficult and challenging.
- Be patient. Your partner may be in the habit of giving orders. Reestablishing the communication patterns you had as a couple will take a little practice.
- Be careful not to get caught in the "Who Had It Worse" game.

For the Returning Partner:

- Realize that it's easy to lose track of life back home while deployed. Things may not be exactly the same as when you left. Taking time to observe the environment and routine at home can help you make a smooth transition back into family life.
- Your partner has had to take responsibility at home and may be rusty at sharing the decision-making. Be patient with each other as you renegotiate responsibilities.
- Your partner's independence has grown during the separation. Keep in mind that you are still needed, and more importantly, you are wanted back home!

As a Family:

- Include the kids in homecoming plans. Ask for their ideas on things such as activities and decorating.
- Plan time together as a family, with opportunities for the returning parent to become reacquainted with each child individually.
- Realize that kids react to change. They may misbehave more to get the deploying parent's attention. Take it easy on discipline as their acting up is often the only way they know how to deal with the stress of change.
- Share your feelings. It's natural to have mixed emotions at this time — excitement and happiness together with nervousness and insecurity. Telling your children how you feel helps them recognize and express what they are feeling.

For the returning parent:

- Enjoy being an honored guest at home for awhile. Find out what rules and routines have changed before jumping in. Discuss concerns privately with your partner and make gradual changes together.

For the parent at home:

- Let the kids and the returning parent "warm up" to one another. After many months with adults, kids' high energy can be overwhelming. Your partner may need occasional breaks.
- Relax and enjoy yourself! Have a wonderful homecoming!

